



THE PALEY CENTER FOR MEDIA

PALEY EDUCATION @Home
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What We're Watching



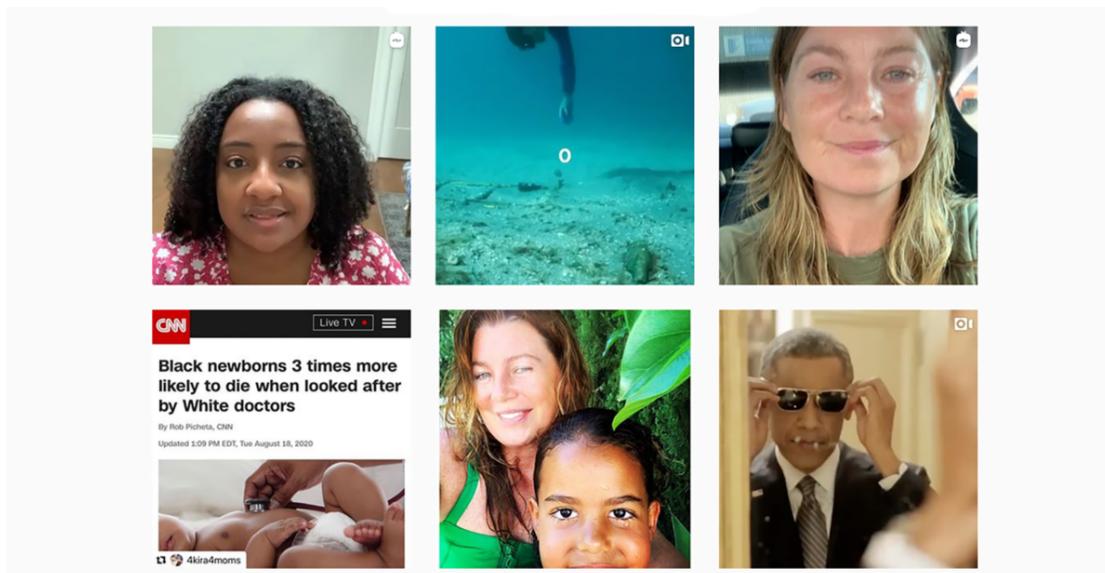
Teen Transmitters Takeover!

For six weeks, *What We're Watching* is being taken over by the Paley Center's teen internship cohort! Each week a different pair will bring you their thoughts on the 2020 media landscape along with personalized recommendations. We hope you enjoy this unique opportunity to hear directly from young voices about the impact this year has had. This week we hear from **Samama Moontaha**, Rising Senior, Bronx High School of Science, and **Jahin Rahman**, Rising Senior, Academy of American Studies.



Media in Quarantine

The curtains closed, lights went out, and the theaters emptied. While we'd usually exit the theater wondering about what show we'll see next, the spread of COVID-19 called for a different kind of theater closure. Instead of "What will we see next?," people around the world began to ask themselves: "When can we sit in a theater again?" Not only did the complete halt of all nonessential TV and film productions affect the general public, but nearly one million entertainment industry professionals were put out of work in just the United States of America alone. [Freelance actors and backstage crew members were especially hard hit](#) by the sudden shut down as this work provides income for extended periods of time and many live paycheck to paycheck. For film production in particular, shifting to remote work is not exactly ideal. It is almost impossible. Thus, a new question comes to the surface, "What now?"



Many actors with large followings on social media have utilized these platforms to voice their concerns about the need for change. Films are not only a source of entertainment, but also serve as a great resource to educate and bring attention to social issues. With recent events including the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, the use of social media to amplify concerns is more important than ever. Although shows, movies, and live theater performances have been put on pause, social media accounts like Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube are still in play. The activity rate on celebrity accounts is extremely high. Ellen Pompeo, most widely known for her role as Meredith Grey on ABC's *Grey's Anatomy*, is a prime example of an influencer who has utilized

her platform to amplify important voices. Her work as an actor was impacted when it was confirmed that the production of the show's sixteenth season was going to be postponed, though Pompeo did not go silent after this announcement. [Pompeo's Instagram feed](#) is full of reposts of messages from incredible black men and women who have shown leadership and patience during this Black Lives Matter revolution. With 7.7 million followers, she is reaching out to a large portion of the population when she speaks on the urgency of the movement and calls to action the numerous things that the public can do to help out.

Many workers in the industry also looked to coaching and mentoring their fans as a way to make an income and continue doing what they love during these unprecedented times. Jane Jenkins, the casting director for *Jurassic Park*, hosted a two-week TV and film intensive where students worked on scene study, cold-reading, and audition techniques. With love and passion for media, Jenkins stayed true to doing what she loves even with the limitations set forth by COVID-19 social interaction restrictions. The classes took place over Zoom, and served as a source of income for her as the cost was \$299 per student.

Although the spread of COVID-19 put a complete halt on the production of on-set films and television, the pandemic gave birth to what may be a new genre we are calling, "filmed in quarantine." Especially for starving artists, being able to direct, cast, film, and edit an entire production from the comfort of your own home is an impressive feat, one sure to set you on the path to a successful career. Dennie Gordon and Larry Fessenden are two of many filmmakers involved in the production of *Isolation* (pictures above), a horror anthology film that was filmed entirely in quarantine. The film weaves together the relatable themes of interaction, love, fear, and family to create a socially relevant story that appeals to people across the world. The fact that the film is entertaining and well-produced while made within the limitations of quarantine is awe-inspiring.





It is crucial to keep in mind that actors are not the only envoys currently creating an impressive body of work during quarantine. For breaking news, we are constantly tuning in to news outlets. With the surge of new COVID-19 cases across the U.S., the Black Lives Matter movement, the upcoming presidential election, the compendium of current events has led to a 64% increase in news watching, [according to a Comcast study](#). Given the current situation, news anchors and reporters have to meet the standards of quality journalism and maintain the trust of the public while quarantining. Many mainstream news anchors and reporters, including Savannah Guthrie (pictured above), from NBC's *Today*, were all anchoring from home. The inevitable question arose, how were these anchors engaging with millions of American news viewers from their living rooms?

For Savannah Guthrie, the answer was found not in her living room but in her basement. Guthrie provided a vivid description of her at-home broadcasting routine during an interview with the *New York Times*. According to the [New York Times](#), the *Today* show coanchor created her own makeshift studio in her basement composed of teleprompters, lights, and a robotic camera. Her husband woke up early to set up the shot and help Guthrie go on air. Her two children were initially kept out of the makeshift studio by duct taping the door as Guthrie printed out her script and did her own makeup. [Daniella Cheslow](#), a reporter for Washington, D.C.'s NPR news station, WAMU, reportedly used fourteen stacked cushions and pillows, a tablecloth, and a blanket draped over a chair to achieve broadcast level audio quality. News anchors and reporters made it work by anything goes methods to deliver quality broadcasts to viewers.

Often working alongside news anchors in broadcast studios, such as NBCUniversal at 30 Rock in New York City, are the hosts of our favorite political talk shows, such as Seth Meyers from *The Late Night Show*, Trevor Noah from *The Daily Show*, Hasan Minhaj from *Patriot Act*, and Jimmy Kimmel from *Jimmy Kimmel Live*. How were these talk show hosts and comedians engaging with their viewers? Unsurprisingly, many of them continued to deliver

quality content from at-home studios and living rooms as well. Jimmy Fallon's *The Tonight's Show* only recently returned to the studio at 30 Rock after four months of airing episodes from home. When *Tonight Show's* episodes were aired from Fallon's home, viewers got to take a look at his home life and his two daughters frequently made [guest appearances](#).



If you have watched the political talk show *Patriot Act* on Netflix, you will realize that the visual aesthetics are one of the strengths of the show. After a short break, *Patriot Act* returned to Netflix in May with remotely shot episodes. Hasan Minhaj (pictured above) hosted the show in front of a green screen with remotely produced graphics. In the most recent season, Minhaj informed his viewers about current events such as the Black Lives Matter movement and the U.S. presidential election with strategic comedy. Before hosting *Patriot Act*, he was the senior correspondent of Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*, hosted by Trevor Noah. Forsaking his well-fitted suit and slick tie, Trevor Noah was delivering his daily episodes of *The Daily Show* from his living room in a sweatshirt. The at-home episodes have been focused on American politics and the national response to COVID-19.

In the face of a pandemic, media is at its peak of vitality. Not only is it a prime source of receiving information and entertainment, but it is a great way to unite people even when they're physically separated. The utilization of popular social media platforms to reach out has impressively shown its ability to put information at our fingertips. Undoubtedly, the shutdown has put numerous entertainment industry professionals at economic risk, though it was also met with a creative response that professional entertainers embraced in order to continue to make a living despite the circumstances. For news anchors and

journalists, the pandemic has made their jobs more important than ever. That being said, quarantine has taken a toll on each and every single individual worldwide. The beautiful unity put forth by the media has surely pushed us to look at everything in a new light and work with hope every step of the way.

As always, if you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas, don't hesitate to reach out to us at eduny@paleycenter.org!

Happy relaxing,

Samama Moontaha, Rising Senior, Bronx High School of Science

Jahin Rahman, Rising Senior, Academy of American Studies

Photos—*Isolation*: Ghost Gang; Ellen Pompeo: Ellen Pompeo, Savannah Guthrie: Today; *Patriot Act*: Netflix



Calling All Young Filmmakers!

[Ghetto Film School Film Credits](#) is a short film challenge for youth, ages 14-21. The purpose of this challenge is to build and shine the light on your skills as a storyteller because storytelling is

a powerful tool to RAISE YOUR VOICE, DEFINE A MOMENT and CONNECT COMMUNITIES!

MORE INFO

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We hope this inspires you to watch and learn together in a new way at home!
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deeply appreciate your support. Please consider making a donation:

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